

Apparent Consumption 1850-1983

U.S. Consumption of Beverage Alcohol

U.S. Apparent Consumption of the Drinking Age Population in Gallons per Year, 1850-1983							
	Beer		Spirits		Wine		All Beverages
Year	Volume	Ethanol	Volume	Ethanol	Volume	Ethanol	Ethanol
1850	2.7	0.14	4.17	1.88	0.46	0.03	2.05
1860	5.39	0.27	4.79	2.16	0.57	0.1	2.53
1870	8.73	0.44	3.4	1.53	0.53	0.1	2.07
1871-80	11.26	0.56	2.27	1.02	0.77	0.14	1.72
1881-90	17.94	0.9	2.12	0.95	0.76	0.14	1.99
1891-95	23.42	1.17	2.12	0.95	0.6	0.11	2.23
1896-1900	23.72	1.19	1.72	0.77	0.55	0.1	2.06
1901-05	26.2	1.31	2.11	0.95	0.71	0.13	2.39
1906-10	29.27	1.47	2.14	0.96	0.92	0.17	2.6
1911-15	29.53	1.48	2.09	0.94	0.79	0.14	2.56
1916-19	21.63	1.08	1.68	0.76	0.69	0.12	1.96
1934	13.58	0.61	0.64	0.29	0.36	0.07	0.970
1935	15.13	0.68	0.96	0.42	0.5	0.09	1.200
1936	17.53	0.79	1.2	0.59	0.64	0.12	1.500
1937	18.21	0.82	1.43	0.64	0.71	0.13	1.590
1938	16.58	0.75	1.32	0.59	0.7	0.13	1.470
1939	16.77	0.75	1.38	0.62	0.79	0.14	1.510
1940	16.29	0.73	1.43	0.67	0.94	0.16	1.560
1941	17.97	0.81	1.58	0.71	1.02	0.18	1.700
1942	20	0.9	1.89	0.85	1.11	0.22	1.970
1943	22.26	1	1.46	0.66	0.94	0.17	1.830
1944	25.22	1.13	1	0.76	1.03	0.18	2.070
1945	25.97	1.17	1.95	0.88	1.13	0.2	2.250
1946	23.75	1.07	2.2	0.99	1.34	0.24	2.300
1947	24.56	1.11	1.69	0.76	0.9	0.16	2.030
1948	23.77	1.07	1.56	0.7	1.11	0.2	1.970
1949	23.48	1.06	1.55	0.7	1.21	0.22	1.980
1950	23.21	1.04	1.72	0.77	1.27	0.23	2.040

1951	22.92	1.03	1.73	0.78	1.13	0.2	2.010
1952	23.2	1.04	1.63	0.73	1.22	0.21	1.980
1953	23.04	1.04	1.7	0.77	1.19	0.2	2.010
1954	22.41	1.01	1.66	0.74	1.21	0.21	1.960
1955	22.39	1.01	1.71	0.77	1.25	0.22	2.000
1956	22.18	1	1.31	0.81	1.27	0.22	2.030
1957	21.44	0.97	1.77	0.8	1.26	0.22	1.990
1958	21.35	0.96	1.77	0.8	1.27	0.22	1.980
1959	22.15	1	1.86	0.84	1.28	0.22	2.060
1960	21.95	0.99	1.9	0.86	1.32	0.22	2.070
1961	21.47	0.97	1.91	0.86	1.36	0.23	2.050
1962	21.98	0.99	1.99	0.9	1.32	0.22	2.110
1963	22.51	1.01	2.02	0.91	1.37	0.23	2.150
1964	23.08	1.04	2.01	0.95	1.41	0.24	2.230
1965	23.07	1.04	2.21	0.99	1.42	0.24	2.270
1966	23.52	1.06	2.26	1.02	1.4	0.24	2.320
1967	23.81	1.07	2.34	1.05	1.46	0.25	2.370
1968	24.33	1.09	2.44	1.1	1.51	0.26	2.450
1969	24.9	1.12	2.51	1.13	1.62	0.26	2.510
1970	25.23	1.14	2.48	1.11	1.71	0.27	2.520
1971	25.63	1.15	2.5	1.17	1.93	0.31	2.590
1972	25.91	1.17	2.52	1.09	2.1	0.3	2.560
1973	26.77	1.2	2.57	1.1	2.13	0.31	2.670
1974	27.75	1.25	2.59	1.11	2.13	0.31	2.670
1975	28.09	1.26	2.58	1.11	2.22	0.32	2.700
1976	28.14	1.27	2.56	1.1	2.23	0.32	2.690
1977	28.72	1.29	2.57	1.06	2.28	0.29	2.650
1978	29.44	1.32	2.61	1.07	2.4	0.31	2.710
1979	30.39	1.37	2.58	1.06	2.48	0.32	2.750
1980	30.59	1.38	2.53	1.04	2.63	0.34	2.760
1981	30.91	1.39	2.49	1.02	2.72	0.35	2.760
1982	30.77	1.38	2.39	0.98	2.76	0.36	2.720
1983	30.47	1.37	2.33	0.96	2.8	0.36	2.690

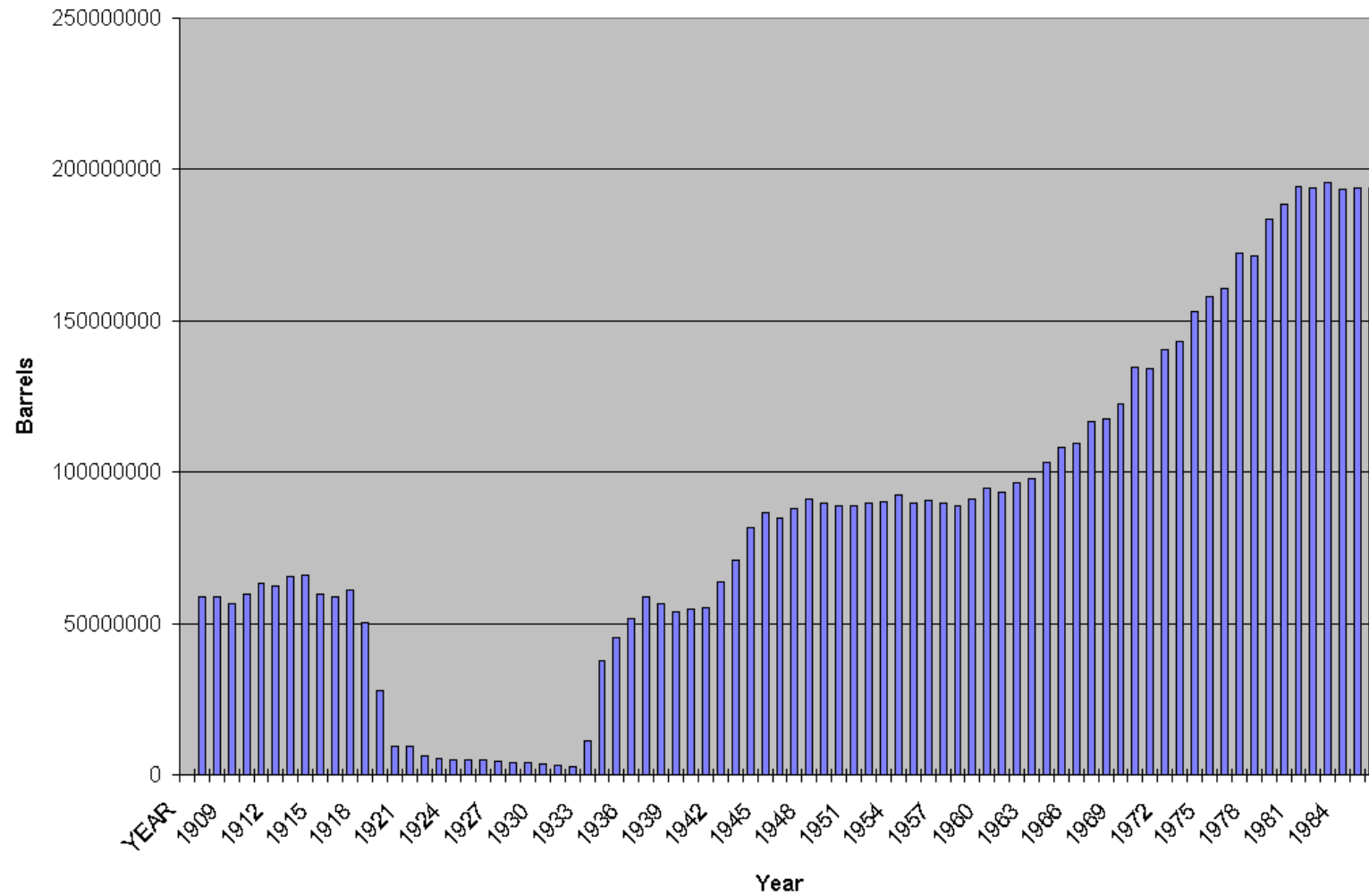
(Volume is expressed in gallons)

These data are taken from:

<i>U.S. Alcohol Epidemiologic Data Reference Manual</i>
(Vol. 1, Rockville, Md. : U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services,
Public Health Service, Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Administration,
National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 1985):6

Temperance and Prohibition. (2006). Retrieved August 1, 2010, from Ohio State University:
<http://prohibition.osu.edu/default.cfm>

Production of Malt Beverages in the U.S. (Beer)



Temperance and Prohibition. (2006). Retrieved August 1, 2010, from Ohio State University: <http://prohibition.osu.edu/default.cfm>

Bypassing the Law

On January 16, 1920, national prohibition took effect. Those who still wanted to imbibe, which was

a large portion of the population, were already looking for ways around the law. For the wealthy, it was fairly easy — they bought up as much wine, beer, and spirits as they could while it was still legal and stored it in their cellars in preparation for the dry spell. Those who didn't have access to such funds had to be a bit more creative.

Under prohibition, the manufacture of industrial alcohol for use in such products as paint was still legal, but it had to be denatured, or made undrinkable by the use of additives. During the early years of prohibition, diverted industrial alcohol was one of the major sources of illegal liquor. Bootleggers attempted to recover drinkable alcohol by removing the additives; they then added coloring and flavorings and sold it as gin or whiskey. The danger was that, in an attempt to cut corners or speed up the process, the additives would not all be removed, leaving the alcohol indigestible or even poisonous.

People also took advantage of other loopholes in the Eighteenth Amendment. Under the law, breweries were allowed to make beer, remove the alcohol content, and then sell it as "near beer." To replace the punch that the near beer had lost, speakeasy operators added grain alcohol, and the product was then known as "needled beer." One of the only segments of society allowed legal access to alcohol was doctors, who could prescribe it for medicinal purposes. Some doctors found it quite lucrative to write such prescriptions for their thirsty patients, though so-called "drug-store speakeasies" were not a major source of liquor.

As prohibition wore on, enterprising Americans became more adept at making their own beer, wine, and spirits. Illicit stills were already a part of life in the Appalachian Mountains, but during prohibition, those stills turned out more moonshine than ever before, with names such as "White Lightning" that hint at their potency. The process was cheap, quick, and easy to conceal in the rural countryside. Recipes for bathtub gin were also passed around, though most people actually mixed it in jugs rather than in their bathtubs.

Smugglers were major supplier of illegal alcohol, with two-thirds of their inventory coming from Canada. The long border between the United States and its neighbor to the north was impossible to seal, and bootleggers found it relatively easy to travel the back roads to pick up valuable Canadian whiskey. Until 1930, when the Canadian government began cracking down on smugglers, prohibition was a boon to that country's economy.

The other third of smuggled alcohol came from the sea. Large vessels sailed to the Bahamas, the West Indies, and other islands loaded up with cases of liquor, and then sailed to an area just outside of American territorial waters off the coasts of big cities such as New York and Boston. Stationed in "Rum Row," they sold their contraband to bootleggers who pulled up in speedy motor boats and then zoomed off, hoping to dodge the Coast Guard. While many bootleggers regularly passed off low quality liquor as premium brands with the use of false labels, a smuggler named Bill McCoy was known for selling only genuine

"I believe there is more bad whiskey consumed today than there was good whiskey before prohibition."

H.L. Mencken

Scotch whiskey, imported from Nassau. His wares gave birth to the expression, "the real McCoy."

With so much bad liquor going around, access to a good, reliable bootlegger became a valuable asset and even a status symbol. When the wealthy wanted to drink socially, they could have quality liquor delivered to their homes to serve at cocktail parties. But most people could not afford such luxuries or safety. For the middle class and those seeking a little more excitement, there were speakeasies, usually tucked away in back rooms or basements of buildings. In 1929, there were an estimated thirty-two thousand speakeasies in New York City alone. The modest estimate for the entire country was 219,000. To gain entry, patrons had to make it past a guard stationed at the locked door who peered through a slot to check for recognizable faces or membership cards. The lure was not so much the expensive liquor and obviously not the mediocre food, but the atmosphere of forbidden fun. The famous speakeasy owner Tex Guinan was not far off when she greeted her customers with a call of "Hello, suckers!"

Nightclubs also flourished under prohibition. In addition to food and liquor, they offered entertainment, often including elaborate floor shows. Many nightclubs were run by gangsters who had enough influence that they didn't have to fear being raided. An evening at a nightclub could be quite expensive. On the other end of the economic scale, the working class drank at illegal saloons known as blind pigs. The alcohol served there was not only cheap but often dangerous, and those who imbibed risked blindness or even death.